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REPORT

RELATIVE TO THE

ALASKAN BOUNDARY QUESTION,

SUBMITTED BY

ALEXANDER BEGG, C. C.

VICTORIA, B. C., 15th August, 1896.

To the Hon. J. H. Turner,
Minister of Finance, &c., &c.

SIR,—In compliance with your letter of the 1st instant, I have the honour to submit the following report relative to my investigations and researches in connection with the Alaskan boundary question.

Attached to the report are several "annexures" in the form of an Appendix, in which will be found many references, statements, arguments and explanations bearing on the subject, giving the views expressed by those who favour the claims of the United States *via* Portland Canal, &c., as well as the views and conclusions of those who adhere to the language of the Treaty *via* Clarence Strait (called Portland Channel in the Treaty of 1825).

As far as the boundary line along the coast of the continent north of latitude 56° is concerned I have only referred to it incidentally, as the surveying parties belonging to the Boundary Commission representing the United States and Great Britain have been engaged in ascertaining where the correct boundary line in that region should be placed.

For the better understanding of why the Treaty of 1825 was framed between Great Britain and Russia I have supplied annexure No. 28. (*See* the Appendix). It will throw much light on affairs as they then existed on the north-west coast of America. From that document will be learned the extravagant claims of Russia and the urgent necessity for Great Britain to take steps to protect their maritime rights.

It is not necessary here to refer particularly to the transfer of Russian America to the United States in 1867; however it may be well to mention the course pursued by Secretary Seward on obtaining possession of the Territory of Alaska. The Russian flag having been lowered at Sitka and the United States "Stars and Stripes" hoisted instead, in token of possession, Mr. Seward at once proceeded to develop his plans. Doubtless he was anxious to annex to the United States that important tract of country, with its islands, lying between Portland Canal and Clarence Strait, and contiguous to the south-eastern portion of Prince of Wales Island. He expected, owing to the similarity of the name Portland Canal to that of Portland Channel mentioned in the Treaty, and under cover of the confusion and mystification which he hoped to produce thereby, to accomplish his purpose.

British Columbia at that time had not quite recovered from the gold mining excitement which began in 1858 and continued well down in the '60s; the attention of her public men

was attracted and their time occupied in arranging for the introduction of the Crown Colony into the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada and the construction of a transcontinental railway, so that but little notice was taken of Mr. Seward's operations in the remote Territory of Alaska.

In the meantime he had decided on making Portland Canal the line of demarcation. He stationed a garrison of United States troops on Tongas Island and established a Custom House there. The troops were disbanded about the year 1875, and the Custom House removed further north to Mary Island. A writer describes the requirements of the Customs at the present time:—"On approaching the island the steamer blows a whistle, the speed of the engine is slackened, and immediately the "Stars and Stripes" are hoisted upon the staff of the Custom House. As soon as the anchor is lowered the captain goes ashore to execute such papers as are necessary to comply with the laws and enable the vessel to proceed northwards. At this station a Deputy Collector is taken aboard, who makes the trip to Sitka or other port and return. Salmon canneries and fishing stations have been established in this region and a large trade with Puget Sound carried on."

The confusion expected by Secretary Seward caused by the similarity of the names, Portland Canal and Portland Channel, has taken place and has been taken advantage of by our neighbours. It has landed some of our own people in what has been called "a muddle of names." Indeed one of the representatives from British Columbia at Ottawa had difficulty in distinguishing between the names and their position when applied to the description as given in the Treaty. He said "that the Portland Canal which is mentioned in the Treaty is the Portland Canal called by that name now." Portland Canal is not mentioned in the Treaty. Further on in the same speech (4th July, 1895,) he said, "when the Treaty was made there was no such place known as Portland Canal." Portland Canal was named by Vancouver in 1793. (See No. 8.)

It adds to the confusion and mystification in the matter of names to use them indiscriminately, as has frequently been done. They should be kept entirely distinct, not using the one for the other in any case. My mission to England was chiefly to search among the national records in London to ascertain if any documents could be found which would state distinctly why Clarence Strait was called Portland Channel in the Treaty. The description of the line of demarcation from Cape Chacon to the 56th degree of latitude, given by Sir Charles Bagot in Statement "D" (see No. 24), together with the confirmation of the same by Mr. G. Canning in his despatch of July 12th, 1824, furnish proof that the framers of the Treaty applied the name to that strait; but as the line of demarcation, according to Sir Charles Bagot's description, had to leave Clarence Strait on reaching Duke of York Island and follow Ernest Sound eastward to the coast at 56°, it became necessary to apply a new name to the combined strait and sound, to include the whole channel, which they called "Portland Channel."

Turning to annexures Nos. 23 and 26 it will be clearly seen that Mr. T. F. Bayard, who was the United States Secretary of State in 1885, is entirely astray in his letter of instructions to the United States Ambassador at London, Mr. E. J. Phelps, when he says that "his conviction is that it was the intention of the negotiators that the boundary line should directly follow the broad and natural channel of Portland Canal and extend, if need be, inland in the same direction until the range of hills at or near the 56th parallel of latitude were reached." He concludes his rendering of this portion of the treaty by stating, "it is not therefore to be conceived that this part of the boundary line can ever be called in question between the two governments." (See No. 23.)

Mr. Phelps, writing under Mr. Bayard's instructions to Lord Salisbury, 13th January, 1886, says, *inter alia*, "no record has been found in print, or otherwise, as far as sought, of the circumstances attending the drawing up of the Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 which would throw light on the understanding of the negotiators on this point." The foregoing statement is not according to fact. A reference to Statement "D" (No. 26), as well as to several other annexures, cannot fail to show the fallacy of the assertions both of the United States Secretary of State and his Ambassador.

By glancing at the extracts from Canadian and British newspapers which have been discussing this boundary question, and which I have quoted, it will be seen that their remarks are fair and temperate. The same cannot, from our standpoint perhaps, be said of the strictures which have appeared in the United States public prints. Nearly all of them display a spirit of hostility to Great Britain.

The editor of the *Victoria Colonist* is foremost amongst the men of British Columbia who have espoused the cause of the Province on this boundary question. The Provincial Librarian, Mr. Gosnell, in a paper which appeared from his pen in the *Canadian Magazine*, said: "Every circumstance and reasonable assumption favours the contention that the Portland Canal of Vancouver's chart is not the Portland Channel meant in the Treaty. A line through Portland Canal is wholly inconsistent with and contradictory of the general terms of the clause in question. Its acceptance as determining the boundary leads to an absurdity. Great Britain is not therefore bound to accept it as the boundary line." (See No. 46.)

In Great Britain the editor of the *Canadian Gazette*, London, has done yeoman service on behalf of British Columbia. (See Nos. 39, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, and 38.)

Those who advocate the United States claim to the Portland Canal boundary continue in many instances to maintain their contention. Several leading men of the Republic have taken part in the discussions; among others Professor Mendenhall, ex-Superintendent of the Boundary Commission, who has contributed an article to the *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1896, on the subject (see Nos. 40, 41, and 42). General Duffield, the present United States Boundary Commissioner, has been ventilating his views in the public press. He has been replied to by the editor of the *Canadian Gazette* (see Nos. 27 and 37). The *New York Sun* of May 24th, 1896, (No. 39) and April 5th (No. 42) discusses the question at length, but not with much perspicuity; so does the *New York Tribune* (see No. 21).

Cape Muzon is mentioned by Professor T. C. Mendenhall as the starting point of the boundary line, as well as on the official charts of the United States, probably to furnish an excuse for following an eastward course (as far as Point Cluam) to reach the entrance of Portland Canal. This is not permissible, as Cape Muzon is on an island separate from Prince of Wales Island, and is therefore not included in the Treaty description, and cannot be made the commencement of the boundary line (see No. 41).

It has been alleged that some change had been made in the convention to suit the views of the Hudson Bay Company. In a letter from Governor Pelly to Mr. G. Canning, dated April 19th, 1824, he says: "I am to state that if His Majesty's Government consider it advisable in other respects to accede to the proposition made by the Russian Government for the arrangement of a line of demarcation between the possessions of Great Britain and Russia on the north-west coast of America, they (the Committee) see no reason to object it, as it will not affect their interests, and more especially as it appears to secure to them free access to the sea for the purposes of their trade on the whole coast to the eastward of the 139th degree of longitude." The foregoing indicates assent to any course the British Government may see fit to pursue. On October 20th, 1824, another letter from Mr. Pelly is similar.

Again on July 24th, 1824, the Right Hon. G. Canning to Sir Charles Bagot says: "The project of a convention which is enclosed in my No. 26 (dated 12th July) having been communicated by me to Count Lieven with a request that His Excellency would note any points in it in which he conceived any difficulty likely to arise, or any explanation to be necessary. I have received the same from His Excellency (a copy of which is herewith enclosed). Your Excellency will observe that there are but two points which have struck Count Lieven as susceptible of any question. The first, the assumption of the *base* of the mountains instead of the *summit* as the line of boundary; the second, the extension of the right of navigation of the Pacific to the sea beyond Behring's Straits." Nothing is mentioned about Portland Canal, nor is there anything said about any alteration in the direction of the boundary line.

On December 8th, 1824, Mr. G. Canning informed Mr. Stratford Canning that he had been named Plenipotentiary at St. Petersburg to succeed Sir Charles Bagot. He was furnished with the necessary instructions for terminating the long protracted negotiations. "The correspondence," said Mr. Canning, "which has already passed upon this subject has been submitted to your perusal, and I enclose to you a copy, first, of the project which Sir Charles Bagot was authorised to conclude and sign some months ago, and which we had every reason to expect would have been entirely satisfactory to the Russian Government."

Count Lieven's *contra project* was also enclosed, but no reference to any change as to the Portland Canal, regarding which Sir Charles Bagot had expressly informed the Russian negotiators "that Great Britain required both its banks."

The instructions further stated: "The whole negotiation grows out of the Ukase of 1821. So entirely and absolutely true is this proposition that the settlement of the limits of the respective possessions of Great Britain and Russia on the north-west coast of America was proposed by us only as a mode of facilitating the adjustment of the differences arising from

the Ukase, by enabling the Court of Russia, under cover of the more comprehensive arrangement, to withdraw with less appearance of concession the offensive pretensions of that edict."

A desire to place before you the fullest information which I could procure relative to both sides of the question has led me, probably, to give too much space to the assertions and arguments advanced by the advocates of the United States claim south of latitude 56° (the Bayard-Cameron line. See Nos. 13 and 14). My own views, supported by extracts from official documents and other references setting forth the correct interpretation of the Treaty boundary line, namely, *via* Clarence Strait and Ernest Sound, have been so fully expressed in former correspondence, so be found in the Appendix to this report, that I need not recapitulate them; but conclude in the full confidence, from what has been said and written on both sides, that the final decision of the arbitration will be in favour of British Columbia according to the views I have herein set forth.

Respectfully submitted,

ALEXANDER BEGG,
C. C. & H.

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			Return to Victoria, July 17th, 1890.
			Articles on the Boundary question, R. E. Gosnell, Librarian.

NOTE.—Those marked with a star are printed in the appendices.

APPENDICES.

No. 3.**

Reply by the Hon. Mr. Davie.

In the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the Hon. Mr. Davie, Premier, in reply to a question (Feb. 14th, 1895) "What steps, if any, have been taken by the Provincial Government towards having our rights recognised or represented in the delimitation of the Alaska-British Columbia boundary line," said:

"As far back as 1877 the matter had consideration, and from 1883 to 1889 frequent and strong representations were made by the Government of British Columbia to the Government of the Dominion of Canada respecting the great desirability of having the Alaskan Boundary definitely delimited, under the terms of the treaties governing the same.

"In 1884 a Report of the Executive Council, dealing exhaustively with the location of the line of demarcation, as described in the terms of treaty, and urging to have the boundary between British Columbia and Alaska defined without delay, was drawn up and approved July 22nd, 1884 (*See Sessional Papers, B. C., p. 151, 1885*). This Report was accompanied by maps and charts.

"An Order in Council, approved November 9th, 1885, reiterating what was advanced in the Minute of the previous year, urged on the Dominion Government an early settlement of the question.

"The Committee of Council, November 30th, 1885, having had under consideration the proposal of the Dominion Government to exhibit at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition a mammoth map of Canada, and having in view its possible bearing on the disputed boundary line between British Columbia and Alaska, prepared a Minute defining their views of the proper location of the line of demarcation, and recommending the same in accordance with the report of July 22nd, 1884, as having its starting point at the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island and ascending to the north through the Duke of Clarence Strait, and thence along the western leg of Behm's Canal till it 'strikes the 56th degree of north latitude,' instead of as incorrectly on the map of Canada, published by authority in 1880, whereby the line is drawn in an easterly direction to and up Portland Canal, thereby depriving the Crown of a large and valuable territory and important waterways. The Committee again urged a speedy settlement of the question.

"In 1887 the question was the subject of strong representations in Executive Minutes forwarded to Ottawa, namely, on the 7th of February and the 16th of March, in which the previous Minutes were called attention to.

"The American Congress in 1888 made a grant for an exploratory survey 'of the line up the Portland Canal'; whereupon representations were made to the Dominion Government protesting against the admission of the point of starting assumed as correct by the American Government, and calling attention to the previous Minutes. To this Minute, embodying these representations, was attached a memorandum by the late Mr. Justice Gray.

"On February 23rd, 1888, Mr. Justice Gray was authorised to proceed to Washington to represent the views of the Government of this Province at a meeting where the matter was discussed. Unfortunately, Mr. Gray died before he had submitted his report to the Government.

"Subsequently the Government of the Dominion of Canada, acting conjointly with the Government of the United States, appointed Commissioners for the purpose of ascertaining

the physical and other data necessary in finally determining the boundary between Alaska and Canada, and the authority of the Province of British Columbia extending no farther than to the representations and recommendations referred to in the foregoing, and the Government having fully expressed their views, no further action on its part was taken, the final settlement of the matter, except by consent, relating exclusively to the jurisdiction of the main parties to the dispute."

At a subsequent sitting, the following resolution was unanimously passed by the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia:—

"Whereas a Commission has been appointed by the Dominion Government, acting conjointly with a Commission appointed by the Government of the United States, for the purpose of delimiting the boundary line between the Territory of Alaska and that of the Dominion of Canada;

"And whereas, owing to the contiguity of the territory in dispute, the interests of the Province of British Columbia are materially affected by the settlement to be arrived at;

"And whereas the Government of the Province of British Columbia have in the past taken active steps in bringing about the measures adopted by the Dominion Government for the location of the line of demarcation, and its early and expeditious determination, and have repeatedly brought to the attention of the authorities at Ottawa the great importance of obtaining all the territory rightfully that of Canada within the terms and meaning of the treaty governing the same;

"Therefore be it enacted, That a respectful Address be presented from this House to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, praying that he will be pleased to move His Excellency the Governor-General to consider the great desirability of British Columbia being directly represented in the negotiations for the settlement of the boundary line between Canada and the Territory of Alaska, and that no effort may be spared to secure for this Province all that was originally contemplated under the terms of the treaty of Great Britain with Russia."

The newspaper report on the resolution says:—

"The mover explained that the Dominion Government does not appear to grasp all the points in connection with this matter.

"Hon. Mr. Turner (Minister of Finance) recognised this as an opportune resolution, as it would be a matter of great importance to this country to have the southern boundary of Alaska laid out as defined in the original treaty, instead of according to the incorrect version made by the United States, which the Dominion appears to have adopted.

"Mr. Hunter (Civil Engineer) stated that he had called the attention of the Dominion Government to the mistake in the United States' version of the treaty so long ago as 1877, when Hon. Edward Blake was Minister of Justice, but though that Government are fully advised of the matter, strange to say, no steps have been taken to correct the mistake. He therefore favoured the resolution. Hon. Col. Baker also spoke in its favour. Resolution agreed to."

The resolution referred to was forwarded to the Governor-General at Ottawa, and dealt with according to the following extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, as approved by His Excellency on the 25th March, 1895:—

"The Committee of the Privy Council have had under consideration a despatch, hereunto attached, dated 27th February, 1895, from the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, transmitting a certified copy of an approved Report of the Executive Council of the Province of British Columbia, embodying a resolution of the Legislative Assembly of that Province passed during the late Session, which urges upon the Dominion Government the great desirability of British Columbia being directly represented in the negotiation for the settlement of the boundary line between Canada and the Territory of Alaska.

"The Minister of the Interior, to whom the question was referred, states that the existing Commission under the Convention at Washington has for its object 'the ascertainment of the facts and data necessary for the permanent delimitation of the existing boundary line, in accordance with the spirit and intent of the existing treaties in regard to it between Great Britain and Russia, and between the United States and Russia.' Also the closing paragraph I. of the Convention reads: 'The high contracting parties agree that, as soon as practical after the reports of the Commissioners shall have been received, they will proceed to consider and establish the boundary line in question.'

"It appears, therefore, that there is no need for the direct representation of the Province of British Columbia upon the present Commission, which is charged with the duty of the collection of facts, particularly with respect to the topographical features of the region in question.

"The Minister recommends that this view of the case be brought to the attention of the Government of British Columbia, with the assurance that care will be taken to guard the interests of the Province in any action which may be taken after the reports of the present Commissioners, which are to be rendered to the Governments of Canada and the United States on the 31st December, 1895, have been received.

"The Committee advise that a certified copy of this Minute be forwarded to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

(Signed) "JOHN J. MCGEE,

"Clerk of the Privy Council.

"His Honour

"The Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia."

No. 23.

Memorandum relative to the Alaskan Boundary.

Whilst writing the history of British Columbia my attention was necessarily directed to the Anglo-Russian Treaty passed in 1825. I traced the position occupied at that time by the Hudson Bay Company, which was shortly after their amalgamation with the North-West Company (in 1821), and when they held a monopoly for trading purposes of the whole northern portion of the continent of America.

In 1831 the Company had extended their trading posts on the Pacific coast from Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River, north to Naas River, and subsequently to Taku Inlet.

Owing to difficulties arising from United States traders, who interfered with the fur trade by introducing intoxicating liquor, fire-arms and ammunition amongst the natives, it was deemed advisable to have a lease drawn between the Governor of the Hudson Bay Company (Sir George Simpson) and the Russian Governor (Etolin) of the whole frontier belonging to Russia on the mainland. This was done in 1838, and gave the Hudson Bay Company the opportunity, by improvising their own fleet of armed vessels, of preventing the United States traders from approaching the mainland coast within the three-mile limit.

This arrangement was continued until about the year 1858, when the gold excitement in the Fraser River and Cariboo Districts, with the influx of miners, brought to a close the exclusive fur trading privileges of the Hudson Bay Company in Vancouver Island Colony and in the newly formed Colony of British Columbia—previously known by the name of New Caledonia. As long as the *lease* referred to remained in force there was no necessity for paying attention to the boundary between the Russian possessions and the British possessions on the mainland.

The Hudson Bay Company in 1843, having changed their mode of dealing with the natives, had withdrawn their trading posts from Naas and Taku, making Fort Simpson their principal trading post north of Victoria on Vancouver Island. Fort Simpson yet remains the Company's principal northern trading post. Little notice, however, was taken of those remote northern regions until after 1867, when Alaska was purchased from Russia by the United States for \$7,200,000.

As soon as the purchase was completed the United States authorities took possession of the newly acquired territory, forming boundaries to suit themselves. From the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island, mentioned in the Treaty as the commencement of the boundary, thence north, they directed their new boundary due east to Portland Canal, over fifty miles, and erected a military post and Custom House on Tongas Island to guard the entrance to those inland waters. That fort has since been dismantled, and the Custom House has been established on Mary Island, at which place British Columbia vessels are required to report, and also at Fort Wrangel, before entering Stickeen River. Notwithstanding these vexations, and it

would appear illegal, hindrances the trade of the extensive mining district of Cassiar, which passes by the Stickeen River, in 1876 amounted to \$350,000, and the duties paid that year to the Dominion revenue, at Victoria and Glenora, reached to between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Soon after the Colony of British Columbia became an integral part of the confederated Dominion of Canada a map of the Province was published, on which the approximate boundary line between Alaska and British Columbia was placed as running north from the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island, through Clarence Strait, and thence by Behm Canal to 56° north latitude in Burroughs Bay. The latest edition of the Provincial map, published this year (1895), shows the same route, with the termination of the water boundary at Burroughs Bay. This, I believe, is not correct. The line should have been marked along Clarence Strait to Ernest Sound (called, in connection with the portion of Clarence Strait traversed, *Portland Channel* in the Treaty). Several maps have been published under the direction of the Dominion Government, which show the boundary as passing through Portland Canal; but the Imperial authorities have been careful to notify the United States Government that the line of demarcation as marked on those maps must not be taken as authorised or correct.

The above noted error on the part of the Government of British Columbia is accounted for, as they were not in possession of the original correspondence on which the Treaty was based and concluded. It is clearly laid down in the despatch of the Right Hon. George Canning to Sir Charles Bagot, dated 12th July, 1824, on which Sir Charles based a statement for the Russian Plenipotentiaries, which he submitted to them as his *final decision*—that the line should run by *Clarence Strait* and *Ernest Sound*. On that statement (marked D in a despatch from Sir C. Bagot to Mr. G. Canning, dated March 17-29, 1824,) the Treaty was based. It was concluded on the same basis by Mr. Stratford Canning in accordance with Mr. G. Canning's despatch to him, dated December 8th, 1824.

By some unaccountable mishap the documents in the Russian Embassy belonging to the Treaty negotiations were lost during Mr. Stratford Canning's term of office there, or soon after the Treaty was concluded; yet so clear and complete were the despatches of Mr. G. Canning, and so perfect a transcript of the instructions they contained were the replies of Sir Charles Bagot, and so faithfully were they carried into effect by Mr. Stratford Canning, who succeeded Sir Charles, that there is not the slightest difficulty, by comparing the correspondence, in following the whole proceedings.

After examining the original records very carefully I have pleasure in stating that I found them in excellent condition and perfect, with the exception that I did not find any trace of a copy of the *draft* said to have been sent to Sir Charles Bagot along with the despatch, dated July 12th, 1824, and which had reference to *Statement D*, formerly referred to in the despatch dated 17-29th March, 1824. I may also be allowed to add, that I met with the utmost courtesy and assistance from the Keeper of the Public Records, and also from the Colonial and Foreign Offices, whilst examining this subject.

The fact of one line of boundary being laid down on the British Columbia Provincial maps, and another on the Dominion maps and United States charts, following widely different directions, led me critically to examine the discrepancy. Being so greatly divergent, one of them, of necessity, could not be the line of demarcation described in the Treaty. The first tangible rupture I found was in a letter from Mr. T. F. Bayard, then Secretary of State for the United States, dated 20th November, 1885, addressed to his Ambassador, Mr. E. J. Phelps, at the London Legation, instructing him to apply to Lord Salisbury for concurrence in appointing a Commission to define the Alaskan boundary, as had been recommended by President Grant in 1872. Lord Salisbury concurred in the appointment of the Commission as requested. Mr. Bayard's letter is plausible and most equivocal. It goes away entirely from the true line of demarcation of the treaty and advocates a new boundary line, which is to proceed *eastward* from the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island, instead of going *northward*, as required by the treaty, a portion of the text of which is quoted by Mr. Phelps in a letter to the Marquis of Salisbury, dated 19th January, 1886, enclosing Mr. Bayard's letter.

In March, 1886, Colonel D. R. Cameron, R. A. (now Major-General commanding the R. M. C., Kingston, Canada), was requested to report on the boundary question. That report was completed in September, 1886. It appears, however, that Colonel Cameron was led entirely astray by Mr. Bayard's letter of November 20th, 1885, which he followed *in toto*, as far as the water boundary was concerned, advocating that Portland Canal should be adopted as the International Boundary Line. It is remarkable that, in connection with his report,

of Cassiar, which
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Colonel Cameron quotes the despatch of July 12th, 1824—Mr. George Canning to Sir Charles Bagot—which plainly states the line is to be drawn from the southernmost point of Prince of Wales Island, *from south to north*, through Portland Channel, till it strikes the mainland in latitude 56°.

By referring to the present maps, it will be seen that Mr. Canning understood the points and line of direction thoroughly, as the 132nd meridian of west longitude runs directly through the point of intersection, on the coast of the continent, where the boundary, according to Mr. Canning's instructions, should reach or strike the continent. It is also evident that this point had been previously discussed between Sir Charles Bagot and the Russian plenipotentiaries, Count Nesselrode and M. Poletica, as is explained in the despatch to Mr. G. Canning (March 17-29), in which was enclosure, *Statement D*, which Sir Charles stated to them was his *ultimate decision* on that point.

This statement (which appears in French) plainly says that the line of demarcation was to be drawn from the southern extremity of the strait called Duke of Clarence, through the middle of the strait, to the centre of the strait which separates the islands Prince of Wales and Duke of York from all the islands to the north of the said islands; thence towards the east by the same strait (which must have meant Ernest Sound) to the mainland, and afterwards along the coast to Mount St. Elias.

It is not easy to understand how Colonel Cameron could overlook those plain statements and follow Mr. Bayard's route through Portland Canal, depriving Great Britain and British Columbia of territory rightfully belonging to the Province, containing about three million acres of land, besides hundreds of miles of sea coast and frontier, together with valuable fishing grounds and harbours, which were secured to British Columbia by the Treaty. The appended rough sketch taken from the "Official Chart of the United States Geodetic Survey," issued March, 1891, will give a good idea of how liberally the U. S. authorities have prematurely helped themselves to such a large portion of Her Majesty's Crown lands.

The *Victoria Colonist* newspaper of February 22nd, 1895, has the following editorial on the Alaskan boundary. It says:

"The discussion of boundary questions is generally exceedingly dry and most uninviting. They are, nevertheless, often of very great importance. This Province of British Columbia, for instance, may be benefited to a considerable extent if the boundary between it and Alaska is correctly defined according to the Treaty of 1825 between Great Britain and Russia, or it may be very materially injured if the present boundary is by authority made permanent.

"It seems to be a mystery how the present line came to be drawn. It is certainly not the one agreed upon by the Convention of 1825. It would appear that the error has arisen from a mistake made in the name of a channel. Someone appears to have either intentionally or inadvertently made a blunder, and others, without taking the trouble to inquire, have followed in the track of the blunderer, and consequently the wrong boundary has come to be generally accepted instead of the right one.

"There is no dispute as to what is the extreme southern point of the Territory of Alaska. It is Cape Chacon, the southern extremity of Prince of Wales Island. From that point, north-west, there is a strait or channel which now goes by the name of Behm Channel. When the Treaty was drawn up, this channel appears to have had no name. [It was named Behm Canal by Vancouver.—A.B.] On the mainland, some fifty miles east of Cape Chacon, there is an inlet which now bears the name of Portland Canal. It is this canal that has been substituted for the strait that is situated between Prince of Wales Island and the mainland. This accidental—as we take it—calling a channel by a wrong name has been prejudicial to British Columbia, depriving it of a considerable extent of territory, and, as Mr. Begg informed us yesterday, of about one hundred miles of sea coast, with its harbours and the islands adjacent thereto.

"When the reader sees the text of the Convention, he will, if he is unprejudiced, decide that our theory of the change of boundary is the correct one. Here it is: 'The line of demarcation between the possessions of the High Contracting Parties upon the coast of the Continent and the Islands of America to the north-west shall be drawn in the manner following:—

"Commencing at the southernmost point of the island called Prince of Wales Island, which point lies in the parallel 54 degrees 40 minutes north latitude, and between the 131st and 133rd degrees of west longitude, meridian of Greenwich, the said line shall extend to the north along the channel [the original text has "called Portland Channel."—A.B.] as far as

the point of the continent where it strikes the 56th degree of north latitude; from the last mentioned point, the line shall follow," &c.

"It should be remembered that the waters of the channel which are not named in the Treaty--wash Cape Chacon, and it runs north to latitude 56° and beyond it. There is not a word about 'east' in the definition, which would certainly be the case if the line was to run fifty miles east before it came to the channel. Besides, what is now Portland Canal does not run as far as north latitude 56. From this it is evident that Portland Canal could not possibly be the 'channel' mentioned in the Treaty.

"It is not singular that the United States in its correspondence assumes that the original Treaty contained the words 'Portland Canal,' but it is most extraordinary that the Dominion Government, in its directions to its own officers, made the same assumption. No one seems to have taken the trouble to examine the original documents in order to find out how they defined the line of demarcation. The Dominion officers seem to have followed, sheep-like, in the track of the United States diplomatists. Luckily, their stupidity of lazily copying the blunder of the public servants of the United States did not legalize what is manifestly an error. It is not too late to correct the mistake that has been made. * * * We trust the Government will not let this matter drop, but will keep it continually before the Dominion and the Imperial Governments until the proper measures are taken to establish the line of demarcation as defined in the Convention of 1825."

The editor is slightly in error in a few particulars of the foregoing article, but, considering he did not have access to the original despatches, he gives a fair and temperate *resume* of the water boundary, according to his available light, gleaned from Orders in Council and the published maps of British Columbia.

Newspaper discussion was only commenced since the work of surveying the boundary north, or parallel 56° north, has been in progress. It is interesting to study the views and opinions of both sides of the controversy, and it might be useful to have a collection of them for reference.

As far as I could learn, the Dominion Government, under the Boundary Commission, has made no effort, even by way of preparation, to change the assumed boundary along the Portland Canal line. The Government of British Columbia feel themselves handicapped in this affair. They are in an anomalous position, being in full possession of Her Majesty's Crown lands and having power to administer them, yet they are powerless in this case to do anything towards remedying what they consider a great injustice.

Premier Turner writes me since he returned from England (October 26th), after I had left Victoria: "Whilst the settlement of the Alaska boundary is one of peculiar interest to British Columbia, and one concerning which the Government has from time to time pressed its views on the Dominion Government, it is one regarding which the Government of this Province is powerless to act otherwise than by making suggestions or representations. As a Province we have no legal or constitutional *status* that can be recognised in the settlement of what is purely a question for the Dominion Government, acting indirectly through the Imperial authorities, to deal with."

The Provincial Legislature, in February last, passed a resolution asking that some sort of representative from British Columbia should be placed on the Boundary Commission, having reference, I doubt not, specially to the boundary line south of latitude 56°. That resolution was transmitted through the usual channel to the Hon. the Privy Council, and a reply returned to the Provincial Government that "It appears there is no need for the direct representation of the Province of British Columbia upon the present Commission, which is charged with the duty of the collection of facts, particularly with respect to the topographical features of the region in question."

By referring to Article I. of the Washington Convention of 1825, I find it was formed "with a view to the ascertainment of the facts and data necessary to the permanent delimitation of the boundary line from latitude 54° 40' northwards to the 141st degree of longitude, in accordance with the spirit and intent of the existing treaties in regard to it between Great Britain and Russia, and between the United States and Russia." As the Convention includes the whole boundary, it was feared, should the Dominion Government continue passive towards that portion of the line of demarcation south of latitude 56° (or the water-boundary), where the engineers and surveyors did not require to examine the "topographical features of the region," that, when the Commissioners' report was handed in at the end of this year, an attempt would be made, from Mr. Bayard's point of view, to consider it too late to interfere

with or disturb his boundary through Portland Canal. Probably it may not be too late yet to inquire by cable if that point has been included in the Commissioners' report.

The accompanying Canadian Pacific Railway "folder" (marked A), referring to Alaska, shows by the map and letterpress how wide-spread the *erroneous Portland Canal boundary* has become, making it appear to the uninitiated that the whole of that region belongs to the United States. It will be noticed, also, that in the latest published Admiralty charts the United States Geodetic Coast Survey Department (presumably) has managed to place the names of several of their public men on those charts, for example: CLEVELAND PENINSULA and LINCOLN and SEWARD Mountains, near the northern end of Portland Canal. The name "*Duke of York Island*," placed by *Vancouver* on his charts and map - the landmark mentioned in *Sir Charles Bagot's Statement D* - is obliterated from the modern charts, and ETOLIN substituted. To the most southern of the "Gravina group of Isles" the name "*Duke Island*" is given, in contravention of the Treaty, and tending further to mystify the geographical names in that region. A small island to the east of the Gravina Group is named "*Mary Island*," on which (also, it is presumed, in contravention of the spirit and intent of the Treaty) the United States have established a Custom House. On *Tongus Island*, as is referred to in the Canadian Pacific Railway folder herewith, already referred to, a fort was erected to guard the entrance to Portland Canal, and the inland waters extending beyond Fort Simpson, which is an important strategical point, as will be seen by the sketch plan herewith (marked B) of prospective railways likely to cross the northern portion of British Columbia to reach the Pacific Coast.

Respectfully submitted,

ALEXANDER BEGG,
C. C. & H.

London, 23rd December, 1895.

No. 24.

Letter to Lord Salisbury.

LONDON, 26th December, 1895.

The Right Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, Premier, &c., &c.

MY LORD, I have the honour to transmit herewith a memorandum which I have prepared, relative to the Alaskan Boundary. I trust that it will be found suitable, and that it will solve the difficulty satisfactorily respecting Portland Channel, which has caused so much perplexity during the past twenty years.

The Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1825 has no ambiguity in itself, and if read in connection with the precise, clear and full instructions of the Right Honourable George Canning to Sir Charles Bagot and Mr. Stratford Canning, and their negotiations with the plenipotentiaries of Russia, cannot be misunderstood.

When the point of intersection is established on the coast of the continent, east of Ernest Sound, at 56° north latitude, it will, I believe, be in accordance with the treaty to follow that line of latitude to the summit of the nearest range of mountains (if not more than ten marine leagues distant) and let it be prolonged northerly, crossing Bradford Canal, thence north-west-ly until Stickeen River is reached. This would include the "strip of sea-coast" mentioned in the despatch of Mr. George Canning to Mr. Stratford Canning, 8th December, 1824, which was intended to be given to the Russians, and all Mr. G. Canning states they intended to ask. Very different does Mr. Bayard's new boundary enclose, which is vastly greater than a "strip of sea-coast."

It would also remove the present vexatious restrictions which have hampered the trade of British Columbia, by a custom house on the Stickeen River and customs regulations at Fort Wrangel, on Wrangel Island, near the mouth of the Stickeen, which is the highway to the northern interior of British Columbia, and the outlet of the extensive gold-mining region of

Cassiar, as well as of the trade derived from the head-waters of the Mackenzie River, flowing north-easterly by the extensive and numerous branches of the gold-bearing banks and beds of the Liard River.

From the record of the negotiations, it is evident that the Russian plenipotentiaries were anxious to obtain possession of Portland Canal as a south-eastern boundary. The Rt. Hon. George Canning, however, clearly states he would not agree to that proposition. His design in adopting the 56th degree of north latitude as the termination of the water boundary on the coast of the continent was doubtless for the purpose of preventing Russia from proceeding farther south on the continent, and so cutting them off entirely from the Portland Canal region. This was effectually accomplished by following the channel which he named Portland Channel. His instructions were so given, fully understood and acted upon by Sir Charles Bagot, as far back as March, 1824. Neither did Mr. Stratford Canning make any change in the articles or wording of the treaty, as can be shown by the despatches sent to and from St. Petersburg.

Mr. Secretary Seward, from the time of the purchase of Alaska by the United States (and probably before it), had, seemingly, his eye on the Portland Canal region, in a similar manner as the Russians of 1824. Strenuous and speedy efforts were made to carry the plan into effect. His people at once (in 1867) began to "move in" and take possession. There was no one at that time to prevent their encroachments. Protests, it is true, were frequently made to the Dominion Government, but they were unheeded; and it was not until after Mr. Secretary Bayar's letter of November 20th, 1885, and the commencement of the surveys of the coast line, that much was known or heard of the location of the line of demarcation.

It will be seen from the "Copy of a Report of a Committee of the Executive Council of British Columbia" (marked C), sent herewith, that in 1884-5 the Provincial Government were making vigorous exertions to have the boundary line settled. They were not clear, however, as to the true definition of Portland Channel. They had not seen Sir Charles Bagot's Statement D, nor did they strictly confine the name Portland Canal to the stretch of water always so called by George Vancouver. Portland Channel, on the other hand, should always have been called by that name, to be understood as described by Sir Charles Bagot. It is not unusual to give a name to a channel not formerly named. In the United States chart from which I traced the very rough sketch herewith, it will be seen that the U. S. hydrographers have given the name "Revilla Gigedo Channel" to the waters between that island and the "Gravina Group." So did Mr. George Canning, seventy years ago. He found that Duke of Clarence Strait stretched too far north and westward (around Prince of Wales Island) to suit his purpose; so he branched off eastward through Ernest Sound, and named the channel required for the line described in the treaty Portland Channel.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

ALEXANDER BEGG,
C. C. & H.

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No. 26.

Statement D.

Enclosure in Sir Charles Bagot's despatch to the Right Honourable George Canning, dated St. Petersburg, 17th and 29th March, 1824, and communicated by Sir Charles to the Russian plenipotentiaries as containing his ultimate decision on the subject. (Translated from the French.) Submitted to the Colonial Office January 7th, 1896, by A. Begg.

"It is a principle which is founded, no less on the recognised opinion of the most celebrated jurists than on universal custom observed between nations, that the discovery or simple occupation of any islands situated on the coast of a continent gives no right whatever to the sovereignty of any part of the neighbouring mainland.

"According to this principle Sir Charles Bagot always maintained, at the conferences he had the honour of having with the Russian plenipotentiaries of His Imperial Majesty, that His Britannic Majesty could not admit that the right of Russia on the north-west coast of the continent of America should extend towards the south on the continent, beyond the point where Russia has actually formed establishments.

"It has never been affirmed by the plenipotentiaries of His Imperial Majesty that Russia possessed any establishments whatever on the mainland, south of 60° or 59° latitude; but they have declared that deprived of a strip of land on the mainland the Russian American Company would have no means of supporting the establishments on the islands, which would otherwise be without any support, assistance or solidity.

"Such arguments, founded on the consideration of the practical convenience to Russia, could not fail to have the greatest weight with the plenipotentiary of His Britannic Majesty, who did not hesitate, in consequence of this observation of the plenipotentiaries of Russia, to abandon the line of demarcation he had at first proposed, viz., that which was to pass through the middle of Chatham Straits to the northern extremity of Lynn Canal, and from thence to Mount Elias, or at the intersection of the 140th degree of longitude, and to propose another, which would not only assure to Russia a strip on the continent, opposite to the most southern establishment which she possesses on those islands, but would also assure to her the possession of all the islands and waters that are placed between this establishment and the continent; in fact, the possession of all which might become, in consequence, of any utility either for solidity or prosperity.

"But the plenipotentiary of His Britannic Majesty cannot admit that Russia could accord or assure to His Britannic Majesty a new advantage by renouncing any part of the coast between the mouth of Portland Canal, and the degree of latitude looked upon as the limit of the Russian possessions in the Ukase of 1821, by renouncing any part of the continent south of the establishments which have already been formed there; for even though His Britannic Majesty recognised this degree of latitude as forming the line of demarcation in regard to the islands, he could not, according to the principle formerly enunciated, have recognised it as the limit on the neighbouring continent on which the Hudson Bay Company had already established several important posts.

"That company having, in effect, establishments near the coast, north of the 55th degree, His Britannic Majesty could not, therefore, without sacrificing the interests of the company, renounce the rights of sovereignty over the coast and the islands that immediately adjoin it, up to 56° 30' north latitude, whichever might be the degree of latitude found convenient to be agreed on, to be definitely taken as the limit between the two powers, as far as concerns the islands farther west.

"The origin of the Portland Canal may be, as there is reason to believe, the mouth of a river which flows through the middle of the country occupied by the Hudson Bay Company; and it is, in consequence, of the highest importance for Great Britain to possess the sovereignty of the two banks.

"It was in the hope of being able to conciliate these objects, considered indispensable by the Imperial Government, and to determine without more delay a question which appeared of equal interest to both parties, to arrange definitely, at the actual time when the plenipotentiary of His Britannic Majesty had the honour to propose, on his last conference with the plenipotentiaries of Russia, a line of demarcation which, while conserving to Russia for a southern limit on the islands the degree of latitude suggested by the Ukase of 1799, would assign, at the same time, to Great Britain, for a limit on the mainland, the latitude of 56° 30' north.

"It would appear that a line traced from the southern extremity of the straits named Duke of Clarence Sound, by the middle of those straits, to the middle of the straits that separate the islands of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, and the islands situate to the north of the said islands; thence towards the east by the middle of the same strait to the continent, and thence prolonged in the same direction and manner already proposed by His Britannic Majesty's plenipotentiary to Mount Elias, or to the intersection of the 140th degree of longitude, would form a line of demarcation which would conciliate, perhaps, in a satisfactory manner, the reciprocal interests, present and future, of both Empires in this part of the globe."

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No. 28.

The Russian Ukase of 1821.

ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE,

LONDON, 13th January, 1896.

*John Anderson, Esquire,**Private Secretary, &c., &c., Colonial Office.*

DEAR SIR,—I have the honour to return to you herewith, with thanks, the thirty-seventh number of the *North American Review* (new series, printed in Boston, 1822), which you so kindly lent to me that I might better understand the Edict of His Imperial Majesty Alexander, Autocrat of all the Russias, and the claims which Russia put forth under that Edict, which is known as the Ukase of 1821. It was issued September 4th-16th of that year, and was laid before the Government of the United States by Mons. Pierre de la Poletica early in January, 1822.

The perusal of the article referred to in the *Review* interested me very much. The writer only quoted the *first* and *second* sections of the Edict, as he says they contained the pith and marrow of the subject. The Edict, however, occupied nearly ten pages of a closely printed pamphlet, and contained *sixty-three* sections. The first section sets out by stating that "the pursuits of commerce, whaling, fishing, and all other industry, on all islands, ports, and gulfs, including the whole of the north-west coast of America, to the 45° 50' north latitude," are all included in the Edict for the purpose of granting the same exclusively to Russian subjects. The second section prohibits all foreign vessels not only from landing on the coasts and islands belonging to Russia, but, also, does not permit them to approach those coasts and islands within less than one hundred Italian miles, without the vessels being subject to confiscation, along with the whole cargo. [Each Italian mile measures 2,025 yards.]

The writer in the *Review* says: "We doubt if pretensions so extravagant and unfounded—so utterly repugnant to the established laws and usages of nations—have been set up by any government claiming rank among civilized nations since the dark ages of ignorance and superstition, when a Bull of the Holy See was supposed to convey the rights of sovereignty over whole continents, even in anticipation of their discovery." * * * * "Even the attempts of Spain to usurp the exclusive navigation of the South Sea in the vicinity of her American possessions, arbitrary as they were, and violating as they did the indisputable rights of other nations, must, when examined with reference to the different periods when they were made, yield in absurdity to the claims now before us. We cannot forbear expressing our surprise that in this enlightened age, when the general principles of national rights have been clearly defined and are well understood, a government possessing the highest influence in the political world, and constantly referred to as the arbiter of national disputes, should prefer claims which can only be supported by the extraordinary notion of considering the Pacific Ocean a 'close sea,' where it is at least four thousand miles across."

President Adams, on receiving the Russian Edict, along with a note from the Russian ambassador, M. de Poletica, expressed his surprise at the extraordinary claim set forth, and inquired if M. de Poletica "is authorised to give explanations of the grounds of right, upon principles generally recognised by the laws and usages of nations, which can warrant the claims and regulations contained in the Edict." M. de Poletica, in reply, declares himself "happy to fulfil this task," and wrote a lengthy letter to the Secretary of State, from which it would appear that the Edict chiefly related to, as he said, "the new regulations adopted by the Russian American Company, and sanctioned by His Majesty the Emperor, my august sovereign, relative to foreign commerce, in the waters which border upon the establishments of the said Company on the north-west coast of America."

The reply by M. de Poletica, which, according to his proposition of fulfilling the task, was to contain historical facts, is published in full in the *Review*, and is shown to be incorrect and erroneous in many of the important points which the Ambassador undertook to establish. The writer in the *Review*, in his criticism, goes on to say: "A few years afterwards, it (Norfolk Sound) was visited for commercial purposes, and, abounding in valuable furs, soon became the

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general resort of all those engaged in that trade. It was frequented by the vessels of Great Britain, France, and the United States several years before the Russians had extended their excursions so far eastward, and it is therefore clear that at that time they had no claim on the ground of occupation. If, then, prior to 1792, *Russia possessed no rights* in this part of the coast but such as were common to and enjoyed by other nations, we confess ourselves unable to perceive why the establishing of a few hunters and mounting some cannon in the corner of Nootka Bay should give her the right of restraining an intercourse and interdicting a commerce which had hitherto been as free as air, and prohibiting the approach of vessels of other nations to shores which the navigators of such nations first discovered and explored! The claim of Russia to sovereignty over the Pacific Ocean north of latitude 51°, on the pretence of its being a "closed sea," is, if possible, more unwarrantable than territorial usurpations."

The *Revue* continues: "We have the authority of Humboldt for stating that in 1802 the Russian Government limited their territorial claims to the north of 55°. They are now extended to 51°, and M. de Poletica informs us that this is only 'a moderate use of an incontestable right,' intimating that the just claims of Russia extend still farther south. If these occupations are submitted to, is it improbable that a further use may be made of incontestable rights?" [The 55th degree of latitude runs near the southern end of Prince of Wales Island, and the 51st degree near the northern end of Vancouver Island.] "With the ingenuity which that gentleman has displayed, it would not be difficult to extend the Russian claims quite to the borders of California, and establish them there as satisfactorily as he had done to the 51st degree. The Russians have already made a considerable settlement on Spanish territory at Port Bolaga, in latitude 49°, and it is possible that, guided by the same spirit of philanthropy which prompted the dismemberment of Poland, the august Emperor may choose to occupy the fertile but defenceless province of California and annex it to his already extensive dominions." * * * "Great Britain, we apprehend, will not be desirous of such neighbours more than the United States, and she may see fit to advance claims that will be found to conflict with those of Russia." * * * "In justice to the memory of her celebrated navigators, Cook and Vancouver, we must declare that the world is more indebted to their indefatigable labours for a correct knowledge of the coast than to those of all others who have visited it. Her subjects were the first Europeans who engaged in the fur trade, and a free access to the *unsettled shores* is at the present time quite as important to them as to those of any other power."

Referring to the British North West Company, as following the steps of the enterprising Mackenzie, having extended their trading posts westward of the Rocky Mountains, and established them from the Columbia River to the latitude of 55°, on the borders of several lakes and rivers that empty into the Pacific Ocean, the *Revue* mentions in connection with the fur trade and the transit of supplies, the Naas River, which reaches the Pacific about latitude 57°, and the Natchastain (the Skeena) a little south of 51°, and adds, "the free navigation of the streams will be highly important to the United Fur Companies (the Hudson Bay Co.); and says further: "the British administration of the present day must be actuated by a very different spirit from that which thirty years ago prompted the expenditure of millions in attempting to resent the outrage committed at Nootka, if they do not resist the usurpation of Russia, usurpation which would compel the British Company to abandon the settlements already made and forego the advantages resulting from free access to the shores of the continent south of 51°."

Such was the state of affairs and such the class of men whom Sir Charles Bagot, His Britannic Majesty's Plenipotentiary in St. Petersburg, had to deal with from 1822 to 1824, when he was succeeded by Mr. Stratford Canning. That there was great delay in arranging such extraordinary claims is not to be wondered at, but rather that they were so well arranged. Sir Charles Bagot dealt firmly and magnanimously with the Russian claims on the mainland, modifying his first proposition by Lynn Canal to his final or "ultimate" decision in "Statement D," where he shut Russia out of Portland Canal and "both its banks," but opened instead Portland Channel *northward* by Clarence Straits and by Ernest Sound or Straits to the mainland at 56°, which is considerably farther south than Sitka.

M. Pierre de Poletica signed the Anglo-Russian Treaty in 1825, but probably he did so with a mental reservation that Russia must have *Portland Canal*. Circumstances which subsequently occurred at St. Petersburg, namely, the abstraction of all documents belonging to the Treaty from the Embassy, looks suspicious, which of course included despatches, drafts, meetings, &c., which if allowed to remain might not be so easily controverted as if they were

non est. Add to this *contre temps* that in 1848 or 1849 a boundary line along Portland Canal appears in a Russian atlas. The Hudson Bay Co. having the whole frontier in their lease from Russia obliterated any special notice being taken of the circumstance of placing the boundary line along Portland Canal; and so the matter remained until the purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867.

The perusal of M. de Poletica's statements at Washington in connection with the *Ukase* would not lead one to expect that he would scruple at a small thing in carrying an official point. I must say, however, that in my researches in the official correspondence prior to the signing of the Treaty I have failed to find any statement which could be construed into the slightest change of the project of the convention as transmitted by the Right Hon. G. Canning to Sir C. Bagot, and embodied by him in his "Statement D."

I am very truly,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEXANDER BEGG,
C. C. & H.

No. 32.

Further Explanations.

Extract from a letter to H. F. Wilson, Esq., Private Secretary to the Right Hon. Mr. Chamberlain, dated Wick, 10th February, 1896:—

* * * "There is one point to which I wish to refer particularly, and that is the strategic position involved in the frontier of British Columbia, approached through Dixon Entrance from the Pacific Ocean to Port Simpson, the nearest open winter harbour to Japan and China on the western frontier. This will be more clearly exemplified by consulting the sketch plan marked 'E,' formerly handed to Mr. Wyld, of the Foreign Office. No one denies the strong position and excellence of Esquimaux Harbour, the British naval station at the south-eastern end of Vancouver Island; yet there are good judges who think it would be an advantage were a second naval station established in the north, at or near Port Simpson, having command of the inland waters of Naas River, Observatory Inlet, and Portland Canal, but which would be lost to the Crown of Great Britain if the *assumed* United States Boundary be permitted along Portland Canal.

"More than seventy years ago Russia coveted this desirable location, and made strenuous efforts to secure it in the treaty of 1825; but the firmness of the Right Hon. George Canning saved it to the British Crown. During the negotiations with Russia to settle the navigation rights of Great Britain, in opposition to the extravagant claims made under the Russian *Ukase* of 1821, Sir Charles Bagot was instructed to modify his former proposals, and, instead of Cross Sound and north through Lynn Canal, to make the 56th degree of latitude, along with a strip of land along the coast, the southern limit of Russian occupation on the mainland. (See despatch, March, 1824, and Statement 'D,' already submitted.) In that admirable statement, Sir Charles Bagot effectually disposed of all territorial claims by Russia on the continent south of latitude 60°, or as far as they were supposed at that time to have formed any settlement on the mainland; but to meet a claim made by Russian Fur Company for a base of operations on the continent opposite to their establishments on the islands, the limit on the mainland was fixed at 56°, nearly opposite Sitka, which was the most southern establishment occupied by that company in 1825.

"The Russian plenipotentiaries, realising the value of possessing the inland waters of Portland Canal and its strategic position, made strenuous efforts to obtain it. They protracted the negotiations at St. Petersburg from 1823 to 1825; at last (Feb. 16th, 1825) the treaty was signed, without any material change from the line of demarcation laid down in Statement 'D' by Sir Charles in March, 1824, and corroborated by Mr. George Canning, July 12th, 1824.

"The Russian Fur Company does not appear to have occupied the coast, or made any settlement in that direction farther south than at Fort Wrangel, on an island near the mouth

of Stickeen River. In 1831, the Hudson's Bay Company erected a trading post at the mouth of Naas River. In examining the records of that date, I find that United States vessels were in the habit of trading with the natives near the entrance of Naas River, and that a Hudson's Bay Company's vessel going towards Sitka was fired upon by the Russians on nearing Fort Wrangel.

"To keep the United States vessels from interfering in the fur trade, the Hudson Bay Company, in 1837 or '38, leased the frontier from Russia, and so obtained the sole monopoly of the trade with the natives. This arrangement obviated the necessity for keeping a separate boundary, and was so acted upon until the Hudson's Bay Company's lease expired, after having been renewed a few times.

"By the lease referred to, the Treaty boundary was for the time being lost sight of by British Columbia, until, in 1867, Mr. Secretary Seward purchased Alaska from Russia, with all its rights under the treaty. He at once took what I believe to have been unauthorised possession of the region between Portland Canal and Clarence Straits south of latitude 56°, in violation of the Treaty of 1825, on the hypothetical basis of an apocryphal line which first appeared on a Russian atlas, published about the year 1849.

"I find that in 1862 John Arrowsmith, of 35, Hereford Square, South Kensington, published a map in connection with a book treating of the fur trade of British Columbia, which gives the boundary as proceeding from the northern end of Portland Canal, in a course similar to that shown in the Russian atlas referred to. The map has the following marginal note: 'This map is copyright, having been constructed from a variety of original materials and at great labour.' Doubtless the Russian atlas of 1849 supplied a portion of the 'original materials' which made up Arrowsmith's map. It is not shown, however, by what authority the boundary *via* Portland Canal was placed on the Russian atlas in 1849, or on Mr. Arrowsmith's map in 1862. It is quite likely that neither the Russian Hydrographer nor Mr. Arrowsmith knew anything of the details of the Treaty; but that the former, finding the name 'Portland Canal' on Vancouver's map, joined the boundary to its northern end, and the latter followed his erroneous example.

"The Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty informs me that not until 1865 did 'Etolin' or 'Etolin' appear on the Admiralty charts, as the island was formerly named 'Duke of York' by Captain Vancouver, and quoted as a land mark in Sir Charles Bagot's negotiations in 1824, relative to the Russian-Anglo Treaty. The name of the island as changed, was founded upon a Russian chart of 1848.' The name 'Duke Island,' in Clarence Straits, the most southern of the group of Gravina Islands, appears first on the Admiralty charts in 1866, having been taken from the United States surveys and sketches.

"The United States authorities have been most persistent and indefatigable in placing new names in connection with Alaska, to suit their Portland Canal boundary, which is now to be found on almost every map and atlas recently published; so that the public are thus educated to believe that Alaska extends south to Portland Canal, including Clarence Straits. Mr. Bayard, however, approaches that part of the boundary very cautiously. In his letter to Lord Salisbury (November 20th, 1885) instructing Mr. Phelps, etc., he meekly and plausibly says: 'It is not conceived that this water part of the boundary line can ever be called in question between the governments.' Certainly an easy way to obtain possession of the assumed *three million acres* of British Columbia's land, together with a most important strategic position, which would render Clarence Straits a 'closed sea.'

"I am greatly mistaken if the present Colonial Secretary will allow British Columbia to be mutilated and dismembered on any such assumption, and contrary to the policy enunciated in the Queen's Speech, which says to 'My Lords and Gentlemen, that the *extension* and improvement of the naval defences of the Empire is the most important subject to which your efforts can be directed, and will doubtless occupy your most earnest attention.'

"Should the Portland Canal region be given away to a foreign power, it would not be surprising if Fort Tongas would soon be re-mounted for the defence of Portland Canal and its sheltered waters. In all my researches regarding the negotiations and formation of the Treaty of 1825, I have been unable to discover a scrap of evidence to warrant or justify the assumption of the Portland Canal boundary line by the United States."

A. B.

VICTORIA, B. C.:

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